

DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

Objective:

To establish policies and a program which will stimulate growth and cultivate career interests in the newly hired young professional employee.

Statement of Problem:

The acquisition and retention of quality career employees is of the greatest interest to the Agency. Attrition among young professionals is recognized to be particularly costly to the Agency because of the considerable money and time consumed in the selecting and hiring process. The security of the Agency also is an increasingly significant consideration during these days when the youth of the country appear to be especially prone to contentiousness and restlessness. Radicals of various kinds continue to attack the Agency, accusing it of such things as supporting the "drug traffic", permeating various "independent" organizations, and of conducting its own "wars". American youth must have faith in the propriety of Agency activities. Underutilizing, ignoring, or mismanaging the Agency's newly acquired young professional can serve to increase his propensity for disillusionment. The Agency can ill afford to dismiss the possible effects that growing disillusionment among these young people could have on its operations.

Discussion:

1. The first three to five years of Agency employment represent the period of time when the bulk of the young professionals determine their career interests in the Agency. In FY 1969, for example, approximately 70 percent of all voluntary separations (excluding retirees)

occurred on or before the fourth anniversary of the employees' service with the Agency. About 40 percent of the professionals who separated during that period did so before their fifth year of service. Admittedly, in the past year or so economic conditions have influenced a decrease in resignations, but it's nonetheless reasonable to conclude that the first few years of an employee's experience with the Agency are of special interest to management.

2. According to John Morgan in his book, Managing the Young Adult, "more promising youngsters are stifled by meaningless early assignments than by any other activity." This assertion has been endorsed by many within the Agency who have observed and talked not only with resignees but with those who remained with the Agency having experienced this kind of frustration. Individual security needs often compel a young person to remain in a job situation which erodes his potential for growth. Are we hiring too much talent for our needs? Are we overestimating the intellectual and educational requirements for many of our "professional" positions? These questions must be addressed if the Agency hopes to improve its ability to match people to jobs. The Agency must in all earnestness re-examine and re-establish standards and skills as they relate to job requirements. The PMMP 70's project, in conjunction with present position classification surveys, could serve to buttress this activity as it focuses on the developmental needs of Agency personnel.

3. An essential part of this review of Agency job requirements should be the re-identification of supervisor requirements. A supervisor should have clear and unquestioned responsibilities as part of management's team. He should not merely serve as a liaison between top management and the working force. Too many Agency supervisors seem to reflect nothing

more than rank inserted in a given component structure to provide both status to the individual and a buffer between the worker and the next managerial level. The Agency must nurture bonafied supervisors from which it can identify its future executive talent if it intends to operate a meaningful in-house developmental program.

4. Having accomplished the necessary preliminary task, the Agency more realistically could tackle the problem of mobility since the interchangeability of personnel depends on the identification of key qualifications or skills required for a given job. Related groups of skills so identified would permit a greater acceptance of personnel rotation between allied career fields and serve to de-emphasize the differences between career services. The welfare of the newly acquired Agency assets; i.e., the young professionals, depends tremendously upon the sincerity of management's effort in this endeavor.

5. It is questionable whether significant results will accrue from any effort to create additional headroom through new incentives designed to accelerate the "retirements" of senior level personnel. A substantial number of high-graded officials are now in their late forties or early fifties, and it is reasonable to assume that many of these anticipate retiring at age sixty. Circumstances will influence year to year fluctuations, but in all likelihood the decade of the 70's will be about gone before a real measure of relief is found from the headroom squeeze.

6. In the selection process it is imperative that management look realistically at the young professional and what he means to the Agency. How many are destined to serve as resource people whose expertise grows as their careers grow, and how many are really needed for executive roles? This question must be answered prior to formalizing a developmental program for the young professionals.

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Recommendations:

1. Executive manpower replacement requirements for the Agency should be established anew via the career services' application of the PMMP 70's procedure. Requirements for the managerial development of young professionals should be determined according to the results of this exercise.

2. Career services should identify key mid-level supervisory positions to which only those young professionals selected for managerial development should be assigned. (This is not to imply that a young professional is assured of becoming an Agency executive by virtue of his occupying such a position.)

3. Young professionals should be hired against specific but challenging requirements within the Agency. They should not be hired primarily for their apparent potential for executive development. (Clericals and other employees who subsequently qualify for professional assignments should serve initially in positions viewed as less demanding or which offer a lesser challenge.)

4. The Office of Personnel, in coordination with the Career Management Office of the career service to which the young professional is initially assigned, should assume responsibility for all special training and/or other assignments (or details) during the period the individual is a provisional career employee.

5. Career service designations should not be given young professional employees until they are formally accepted as career employees.

6. Between the young professional's third and sixth year of service, the Head of his career service should determine whether the attributes of the individual are such that he should be earmarked for assignment to a

key mid-level supervisory position or should be continued for development primarily as a resource expert (possibly at a senior level). The Head of the career service should designate only that number of individuals for managerial development for which there are requirements.

7. Plenary sessions of representatives of the Career Management Office of all career services should be regularly scheduled to promote:

- a. Improved inter-service relations.
- b. Information exchange.
- c. Employee rotation assignments.
- d. Better identification of new-hire requirements.
- e. A "clearing house" mechanism to identify true job vacancies.
- f. The development of inter-service "career ladders."

8. An "Employees' Center" should be established to maximize the opportunity for Agency employees and young professionals in particular to satisfy their needs for assistance and support, recognizing that the Agency is considerably different than other Federal agencies in its demands on the individual.